OBSERVATIONS

on

INDIGESTION:

in which is satisfactorily shewn

THE EFFICACY OF IPECACUAN,

in relieving this, as well as its connected train of

COMPLAINTS

peculiar to

THE DECLINE OF LIFE.

The Third Edition with Additions.

TRANSLATED FFOM THE FRENCH MEMOIR OF

Mr. DAUBENTON,

MEMBER OF THE R: MED: SOC: FARIS.

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ADVERTISEMENT

IPECACUANHA, *now ascertained to be the root of the* CALLICOCCA *Ipecacuanha, has long been used in this country, as a safe and gentle emetic. The effects of it, taken in small doses, as an alterant, do not appear to have been so much attended to, at least by the generality of practitioners: although administered in this manner, as a specific for dysentery, it was first introduced as a medicine on the continent, by the celebrated physicians* HELVETIUS *and* PISO, *where it still continues to be considered as an efficacious medicine by the most respectable practitioners. The original tract of Mr.* DAUBENTON *on this subject having been long extremely rare, I made the following translation from a borrowed copy, for my own use; and when I acquiesced in the request of a respectable bookseller, to permit him to publish it, I certainly did not anticipate so*

rapid a sale: the great demand for it proves, either that the complaints in which the author recommends it are very prevalent, or, that the afflicted have derived benefit from the use of it; that the last mentioned effect has taken place in several instances, I have ascertained beyond a doubt, by the fact, that several persons have called to thank me in person, for the relief they have obtained in complaints of the stomach, from the use of this remedy.

It may be of use here to point out some other complaints, in which small doses of Ipecacuanha have been found, by experience, to be an useful remedy.

In all cases of relaxation, it operates as a gentle astringent: the celebrated LINNÆUS *recommends it as efficacious in* fluor albus: *in* dysentery *its virtues have long been acknowledged: it is also useful in that distressing complaint peculiar to old age the* diarrhœa senilis. *In these complaints, it may occasionally be combined with toasted rhubarb.*

In complaints of the stomach, and relaxations of the alimentary canal, I have given a pill composed of one grain of Ipecacuanha, with two of rust of iron, two or three times a day, with advantage.

In the hooping cough of children, it is an excellent remedy.

In the spasmodic asthma, it frequently gives relief; as well as in painful menstruation: in these cases, as well as in the diarrhœa accompanying phthisis, it answers very well to combine it with opium: these two medicines counteract the effects of each other, and form a very useful compound, as exemplified in the pulvis Ipecacuanhæ compositus of the pharmacopœa.

In catarrhal complaints I find the following pill a very useful remedy.

℞. Pulv: Ipecacuanhæ gr. vi.
Opii Pur: gr. xii.
Contere, et cum Extract: Gentian: q. s. f: Pil: N. xii.

Five grains of Ipecacuan given at the commencement of a paroxysm of intermittent fever, will frequently remove the disease.

In every species of internal hæmorrage, as hæmoptisis, hæmaturia, discharges of blood from the urethra, or in the bleeding piles, Ipecacuan may be given in doses of a grain, every two hours with advantage: nor is there any occasion to be alarmed should it even excite vomiting, as we frequently find internal hæmorrhage stop on the access of spontaneous vomiting. Respecting this subject, I shall cite the opinion of the celebrated and candid Mur-

RAY. *"In singulis, modo recencitis hæmorragiarum speciebus et ego quidem ad Ipecacuanhæ auxilium sæpius confugi; nec unquam spe frustratum esse profiteor. Maxime autem tum convenire mihi visa est, quum spasmus, hæmorragiam caussans, a stimulo bilioso excitaretur. In uno casu, in quo præsentaneum vitæ periculum imminebat, efficacissima quævis, præter Ipecacuanham, incassum adhibita fuerant; sed hæc, post tertium præbium grani dimidii profluvium admodum jam compescuerat, et post octavum penitus sufflaminavit, citra evacuationem. Capiebantur autem præbia singulis horis."**

I shall conclude, by stating, that in cases where any preparation of opium has been taken as a poison, Ipecacuan given in doses of ten grains, every ten minutes till it produces vomiting, is a safe and effectual antidote. The action of the stomach should be assisted by drinking plentifully of warm water, with every quart of which, a table-spoonful of common table mustard may be mixed.

A. P. BUCHAN, *M. D.*

Percy Street.
10*th February*, 1807.

* Andreæ Murray, Apparatus Medicaminum, vol. I. page 823.

INTRODUCTION.

M. DAUBENTON was originally educated with a view to the profession of Medicine. A strong predilection for the study of natural history, evinced at an early period of life, introduced him to the acquaintance of the Count de BUFFON. *With this celebrated naturalist he was associated in all the labours of his splendid history of animal nature. All the dissections, subservient to the department of comparative anatomy, were made by him, or under his immediate direction. The few writings he has*

left on subjects out of the pale of natural history (as for example, his Directions for the Management of Flocks) are directed with the most scrupulous attention to utility. It is not to be conceived, that a man of his reputation in science would lay before the Royal Medical Society of Paris, of which he was a member, a paper, vouching so strongly for the salutary effects of a medicine, of the efficacy of which he did not entertain the most complete conviction. Not being engaged in the actual practice of medicine, he could have no selfish or sinister views in recommending the use of Ipecacuanha in this particular class of diseases. His own example is a proof that he understood, at least, the art of preserving health; as he died a few years ago, after having weathered the storms of the Revolution, at the advanced age of 84.

The translator of this little tract can truly declare, that since he became acquainted with the information contained it, his practice in the complaints here enumerated has been more successful and satisfactory than it was previously, and his sole motive for publishing the translation, which was originally made for his own private use, is to extend the knowledge of what he conceives to be a practical improvement in the art of Medicine.

A MEMOIR

ON

INDIGESTION.

In the division which has been usually made of the life of man into different ages, the commencement of old age has in general been fixed about the fortieth or forty-fifth year of life, immediately following the age of maturity and manhood. The ancient physiologists denominated this first period of senescence, *senium crudum*, or green old age, to distinguish it from actual old age, which commences at the age of sixty or sixty-five. Notwithstanding this distinction, we cannot with propriety in our language denominate a man at

forty-five an old man. It is at least that period, however, at which the human body first exhibits symptoms of being impaired; the age of manhood is then past, the bodily powers begin to diminish; what in my opinion may be termed retrograde age, rather than old age, commences: because we are not yet sufficiently debilitated to be ranked among men actually old.

The human body has its periods of increase, of permanent vigour, and of decay. The power of all its functions, without any exception, depends, not only on the present actual state of health, but also on its periods relative to the different epochs of life: digestion follows this general law; its agents, the organs by which it is carried on in infancy are feeble, but they daily acquire strength; in youth they possess all their vigour, which they retain during manhood; as life declines, they diminish; become weak in old age; and in decrepitude they are nearly extinguished. In the other functions of the body similar variations are found to occur; they are

manifest in the power of the muscles, in the organs of generation, of hearing, and of sight, &c. the periods of these changes differ in the various functions of the body: those of generation are the first that fail; the full strength of the muscles endures longer; the organs of sight decay previous to those of hearing: these epochs vary in different individuals, because they depend on the peculiar constitution of the body.

As life declines, the stomach requires care and attention: those who are liable to indigestion then begin to experience more frequent returns of it; those who have never felt it, except when caused by extraordinary circumstances, now begin to suffer more from slight causes.

The most frequent species of indigestion is not that which is best known; it is indeed seldom termed indigestion, because it is not accompanied with any serious symptoms, and is not followed by vomiting or purging; it is not however less real, or less dangerous in the remote consequences: it becomes of importance to detect

such symptoms, in order to prevent other maladies of which they lay the foundation, and also to avoid that state of languor of which they are the source.

Most people who lead a sedentary life, without being obliged to exercise some active employment, complain of their digestion : they perceive the food lie heavy on the stomach after a meal. This uneasy sensation is accompanied with a sort of torpor, which impedes the functions of the body and obscures the mind : this state of uneasiness gradually subsides, the corporeal powers resume their energy, and communicate to the stomach sufficient force to overcome the obstacle opposed to it; the progress of its action manifests itself by the quantity of air it causes to be discharged from the mouth, the escape of which is often accompanied with noise.

Although this air has in general neither taste nor smell, it is not however precisely the same as that of the atmosphere ; chemists suppose it to be a mixture of fixed and phlogisticated air, of

inflammable and of atmospheric air; be it what it may, in order to avoid all mistake concerning the denomination of this mixture, in regard to its properties, I shall name it the air of indigestion. The effort made by the stomach to expel it is frequently indicated by a painful sensation, which ceases the moment it escapes; after its escape the indigestion terminates, and the stomach recovers its natural state.

But if the stomach be incapable of disencumbering itself of the air which oppresses it, the indigestion is more violent, and of longer duration; if it continues till the time when the body becomes tranquil, and is extended in the bed, the air then escapes from the stomach with more difficulty, its quantity augments to such a degree that it acts not only on that viscus, but on other parts of the body, by nervous sympathy. It produces heaviness, or giddiness of the head, a sense of oppression and of heat in the breast, palpitations of the heart, trembling of the knees, cold in the legs, and a sweat to break out over the

whole body ; in one word, a state of sensation so very uncomfortable as to compel a frequent change of position, and even of entirely rising from bed. These movements promote the escape of the air from the stomach, and procure relief. When the quantity of the air is diminished, the stomach is more at liberty to pursue its proper mode of action, the air escapes by degrees, and the indigestion terminates.

If the uneasy state of the stomach is not sufficient altogether to prevent sleep, the repose is troubled by frightful dreams, respecting horrid spectres, from whose fangs it is impossible to escape, or situations of distress with which it is in vain to contend, while deep groans and inarticulate sounds alone issue from the labouring bosom of the unhappy sufferer amidst his struggles to implore assistance.

After sleep, indigestion manifests itself by a sensation of heat in the chest and stomach, by want of appetite, by a languid feeling of the body, and a melancholy state of mind, easily

affected by fear and terror, and soon irritated. After leaving bed, when the various motions of the body have caused the air to escape from the stomach, and have changed its state, the effects of the indigestion terminates, and the mind resumes its usual state.

This complaint, though so common, may be attended with unpleasant consequences, and most men are interested in the discovery of means to remove or to prevent it. Having in my own person suffered much from it, I have endeavoured to discover its causes and its remedies. I have treated of this subject at length in a work which I mean to publish, after having submitted it to the Royal Society of Medicine, and obtained their approbation. I shall at present only state some of the leading positions contained in that work.

With a view to discover the most effectual means of preventing those indigestions to which the decline of life is particulary exposed, I enquired what species of food was most suitable to

human beings, in order to discover whether the selection of proper aliment was not sufficient, without such other assistance as is commonly sought after when the stomach begins to be enfeebled by age.

In a healthy body, animal and vegetable matter is converted into an equally good kind of chyle. To be convinced of this fact, it is sufficient to consider, among the various classes of animals, those which eat flesh, and those which are nourished by vegetable productions; it will then appear very evidently that these two classes of substances, though apparently very different to our eyes, produce in both species nearly the same flesh and the same blood. Comparing two individuals selected from each of these classes, we recognize in both the same digestive organs, and nearly the same viscera. There are animals who are nourished equally well by animal and by vegetable food: I believe there are hardly any who could not subsist on either of these species of aliment, were they constrained so to

do by necessity, or if the articles were so prepared and so changed by the art of cookery, as to render them more agreeable, and more easy of deglutition. It appears however that vegetables are the most natural food of animals, and in fact they do constitute the support of the greatest number. The rhinoceros and the elephant, those two prodigious animal masses, which in magnitude surpass all other quadrupeds, have no other food than the substance of vegetables. The giraffe, the elk, the bull, &c. which in bulk far exceed any of the carnivorous animals, live in like manner solely on vegetable food.

These considerations have induced me to believe the flesh of animals is not at all better calculated than the substance of vegetables to be well digested, to afford good chyle, and consequently to support the vigour of the body, to aid its growth, and to repair its losses.

Consider the inhabitants of the country, who in general are unable to obtain for themselves any thing more than the bare necessaries of life;

we perceive that they subsist wholly on bread, with a few ill-cooked vegetables, and things of the like nature. If they are not deprived of such aliment, if it be not obtained by too great a degree of labour, if these men be decently clothed, and lodged so as to be protected from the inclemency of the weather, they all enjoy good health; they digest well, whence there results a well-conditioned chyle, since it furnishes them with strength and activity sufficient to support hard and almost incessant labour; such is the product of aliment derived from the vegetable kingdom: Certainly there can be no kind of nutriment superior to that which imports sufficient strength and maintains sound health.

The flesh of animals has however by its nature a more close relation to the different substances of which our bodies are composed: it appears a more substantial, and consequently a more invigorating aliment than vegetables; if that be the case it must necessarily impart more strength to his body, and more activity to the blood, and

render all our secretions more abundant. To produce these effects, it is requisite that the flesh of animals should furnish a chyle more active than what is derived from vegetables.

In order to understand the effect of the chyle which is derived from animal food, let us attend to those persons who are nourished by animal food, and the juices extracted from it, and who live in abundance, or at least in such a state of case that leaves nothing to be desired for what is commonly termed good living. In general they appear more jolly, and with a fresher colour in the face; they are more plentifully nourished, but they are too much so: humors of all kinds predominate in every part of their bodies, enervate them by their quantity, and diminish their active powers instead of augmenting them. In this languishing condition, exercise, so requisite to consume those superabundant humours, or at least to keep them in circulation, is taken with reluctance; they are arrested by the most trifling obstruction, they corrupt by stagnation, and the

product of this nutritious diet is soon converted into the fertile source of disease.

It may be objected to me, that this evil disposition of the body arises from the abuse alone, and the excess of good nourishment; but, were this nourishment proportioned to the real wants of the system, it would always be productive of advantages, and even better effects than what are derived from a vegetable diet.

To this I reply, that in supposing the most scrupulous attention and the most precise measures taken, in order to adapt the quantity of this nutriment to just limits; a condition is taken for granted which is contrary to nature, because this reduced quantity of aliment would not be sufficient to satisfy appetite; the body might indeed be sufficiently nourished, while the stomach would not be duly distended, so as to appease the sensation of hunger; this again would be productive of an unnatural state of the body, which it would soon become necessaay to remedy by augmenting the quantity of food;

then further precautions would be required in order to prevent the injurious consequences produced by such increase; and these injurious effects would at all times be more certain than the precautions requisite to prevent them. This pretended good nourishment, by imparting too much action to the body, in reality debilitates it, and accelerates its decay; and, under the appearance of the most vigorous health, discloses the latent germs of various maladies. From all this I conclude, that vegetable food, the use of which requires no particalar care nor attention, constitutes the nutriment most proper for man.

Moreover, the example of carnivorous animals is not conclusive to determine the nature of the aliments most proper for man, because, from the conformation of these animals they have fewer relations with man than those animals who live on vegetables. I have clearly ascertained this fact by comparative anatomy, in the dissection of a great number of animals of different species.

Apes are animals who differ the least from

us in the general conformation of their bodies, particularly in that of the mouth, of the teeth, of the tongue, of the throat, of the œsophagus, of the stomach, and of the intestinal canal. This analogy, which I have carefully traced between man and the ape species, doubtless takes place in the functions of digestion as well as in the structure of the alimentary canal, consequently there is every reason to infer a similar analogy in the nature of their respective food. But the wild apes who range at liberty their native woods, live solely on vegetable productions; it is then highly probable that man, in the state of pure nature, living in a confined society, and in a genial climate, where the earth required but little culture to produce its fruits, did subsist upon these without seeking to prey on animals. He did not betake himself to the devouring of flesh, except in circumstances where he was constrained to it by necessity, or seduced by curiosity, and afterwards persisted in it from taste, as happens to the apes who are domesticated, and taught to

live in the society of man. The flesh of animals is not then the most proper food of human beings, and excess in it is more to be dreaded than in vegetables even for the most healthy. With respect to those who are feeble and liable to indigestions, this food requires still greater precautions, in proportion as it is more difficult of digestion.

Although the digestion of vegetables and of the aliments that are prepared from them, may be less difficult than that of the flesh of animals, we are not therefore to conclude that a vegetable regimen is the best means of preventing indigestion in the decline of life. By presenting to the stomach a less substantial kind of food than that to which it has been accustomed, at a period when it is already deprived of some part of its powers, we should run the risk of enfeebling it still farther without removing the cause of indigestion, which is effected by the fluid secreted by the glands of the stomach. When that organ is debilitated, the liquor se-

creted by it inspissates in the glands; it even becomes so viscous as to adhere to its coat in a glairy form, whereas it ought to be fluid, and to flow unceasingly into the stomach, in order to effect the process of digestion by gradually mingling with the aliments. We ought then, if possible, to employ some means which may communicate energy successively to different parts of the stomach, without irritating it so much as to corrugate its membranes as a purgative, or to convulse them like an emetic; it is enough that this agent should produce some motion in the interior coats of the stomach, and impart an energy to the glands, without corrugating them.

By what means then is it in our power to produce these effects with propriety and precision? It is possible to be effected by the powder of Ipecacuanha, a remedy well known but neither sufficiently employed, nor esteemed as it deserves, as being the best medicine for those indigestions that occur in the decline of life. It should be exhibited in a very small dose, lest it should be pro-

ductive of any sensation of pain or nausea; it should merely occasion a slight feeling of a vermiculating motion in the stomach, which is sufficient to detach the glairy matter from its inside, becoming the means, without more violent excitement, of expelling this pregnant source of disease from the body in a state of viscosity.

It is impossible to determine, *a priori,* the precise dose of ipecacuanha which will not occasion nausea; there are persons who can bear two grains without being sick, and others whose stomach cannot bear a third or even a fourth of a grain without nausea. It becomes therefore requisite to commence with a very small dose, and to augment it gradually, as may be found necessary, till the operation of the remedy becomes sensible. I have repeatedly experienced beneficial effects from it in my own person, that surpassed my expectations; and I have prescribed it to many others, with whom it has had similar success. I consider it therefore as a duty

to publish these observations on the utility of this simple remedy, for the benefit of those persons who have delicate stomachs, and as particularly useful in that species of indigestion which is so frequently found to attend the decline of life.

APPENDIX.

THE preceding Memoir, having been originally read at a meeting of the Royal Society of Medicine, on a day when several other papers were to be read at the same sitting, I was at that time obliged to abridge it. Moreover, it was not my intention to offer any detailed directions for the use of ipecacuanha in the peculiar complaint in which I have advised it; my chief purpose was to acquaint physicians and the public, that this remedy, though generally known, was not sufficiently employed, neither was its utility duly estimated in those complaints arising from indigestion, and which occur to so great a number of persons about the turn of life *(l'age de retour.)*

In consequence of the intimations concerning, and extracts from, my memoirs that have ap-

peared in various journals, I have had letters addressed to me from all quarters, requesting copies of my memoir, or containing queries concerning my method of administering this medicine. These considerations have induced me to reprint it, and to add such explanations as I hope will prove satisfactory to those persons who are desirous of making trial of ipecacuanha.

I chiefly recommended this remedy in those cases where indigestion arises from no other cause than weakness of the stomach, occurring about the decline of life. Should there be any doubt respecting this matter, it is proper to have it removed by the advice of a physician.

The ipecacuanha, adverted to in my Memoir, is the brown sort usually employed in medicine.

The most proper time to use this medicine is in the morning fasting: As this remedy ought to be taken in a very small dose, if it were taken after eating, or immediately previous to a meal, it would be mingled in the stomach with the general mass of aliment, and produce but little effect on that viscus.

The best mode of administering ipecacuanha, and that which I generally advise, is to take a small quantity of the powder in a spoonful of water, or of wine, by which it is carried into the stomach without any admixture of foreign matter: it may be swallowed also in a little of the pulp of a roasted apple, or in any jelly. The most easy and least unpleasant manner of taking ipecacuanha, is in form of lozenges, containing each about one sixth part of a grain of ipecacuanha, combined with sugar. The quantity of the powder may occasionally be augmented.

Ipecacuanha used in the manner I have directed is beneficial not only in indigestions taking place in the decline of life, but also in similar complaints occurring at other periods, provided they arise from debility of the stomach.

I have been asked whether it was my intention to invert the order of nature by the use of the remedy which I propose for the indigestion peculiar to the decline of life: any such pretension would be ridiculous: but do we pretend to invert the order of nature by the use of spectacles,

when the eyes stand in need of their assistance? The same reasoning applies to the stomach, when it is enfeebled by age, when the secretion produced by its glands diminishes, and becomes glairy, this important organ is then invigorated by ipecacuanha, which carries off the inspissated mucus, promotes the secretion of the proper gastic juice, and thus obviates indigestion. If it recur, the remedy ought to be repeated; and the dose, if necessary, augmented, in like manner as we have recourse to spectacles of higher magnifying powers, in proportion as the state of the eyes require them. This is not changing the course of nature, it is affording her the assistance she stands in need of.

Let me remind those persons who are of a robust and well constituted temperament, who yet enjoy sound and uninterrupted health, that the most perfect constitution is not unchangeable; that irregularity and excess may prove fatal at every age; and that even they are not exempt from the common decay of nature.—It is true, that this period of decay is more re-

mote from them, and that it may be less perceived, because its approach is more gradual; at the same time these persons ought even to be more attentive than others to the slightest indications of any change of health, because a trifling indisposition which unhinges a man of feeble constitution, is not felt by one of a more robust. Constitutional vigour may even destroy the seeds of a disease, but it more frequently happens that the effort of nature is inadequate to effect this purpose: the cause of evil makes it advance in secret; during the unobserved struggles with which the disease insensibly gains ground, and when at length it manifests itself by decided symptoms, it is always violent, generally obstinate, and not unfrequently fatal. In a feeble constitution, on the contrary, the most trifling malady is announced by obvious symptoms, which enforce the necessity of preventing its consequences, by employing the means necessary to put an end to it, at a proper and sufficiently early period. Invalids, aware of the natural imbecility of their constitution, are uneasy at the slightest indication of disease.

Those who rely on the innate vigour of their frame remain too frequently in a state of deceitful security; let those happy favourites of nature, who enjoy the blessing of an uninterrupted flow of health, endeavour to retain the possession of this best gift of heaven; let them remember also that it is perishable; the most vigorous constitution may be exhausted, the best compacted frame may be injured, and is liable to decay. In particular, let them beware of the approach of that species of indigestion which begins to manifest itself about the turn of life, a want of due attention to which, too frequently leads to the destruction of the best constitution. Let not even the most healthy neglect the advice that is in a more peculiar manner addressed to the invalid, if they wish to preserve their constitution unimpaired, at that period of life when the stomach is liable to be critically affected.

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